

12th District Report



February 1998



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Dear Friends:

The Legislature began its 1998 session on Jan. 12, and we have a full range of issues to cover in just 60 days.

This newsletter will inform you about some of the issues we'll be considering. Although it's impossible to include all that will be covered in the '98 session, this report will highlight some of the most prominent issues.

Water, agriculture, transportation, education and crime are just some of our priorities. We're also working to spend taxpayer dollars responsibly, and to keep the state budget well under I-601 spending limits.

It is an honor to serve you in the House of Representatives. During the interim I met with as many of you as possible, and held several town hall meetings. I appreciate receiving your input, and I encourage you to keep in touch with me during and following the session. Your questions, comments and suggestions help me represent you better.

Sincerely,

Linda Evans Parlette
State Representative

Representative Linda Evans Parlette



Transportation funding

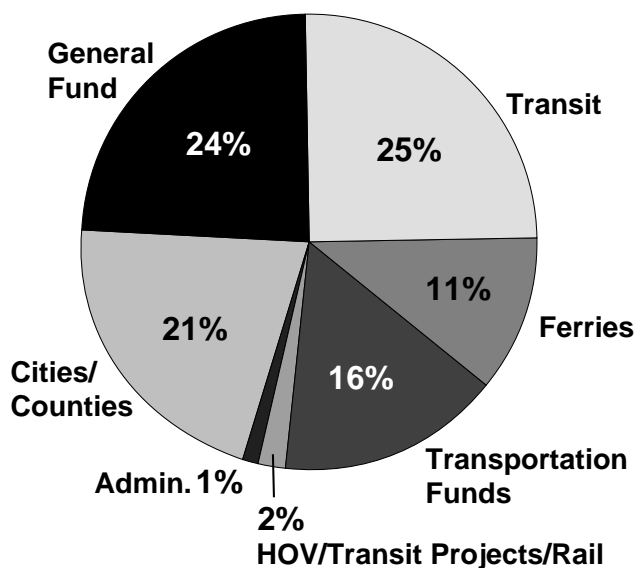
House and Senate Republicans have put together a \$2.4 billion transportation package that will address Washington's transportation needs

without raising the gas tax.

The plan calls for transferring Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) money from the general fund to the transportation fund. Right now, about 54 percent of the MVET — also known as the car-licensing tax — goes to transportation.

MVET Distributions

Total 1997-99: \$1.59 billion



The new proposal would protect criminal justice funding programs currently funded by MVET by making a dedicated fund within the general fund. It would also cut the car-licensing tax by \$40 or more for most vehicles.

Shifting money from the general fund to the transportation budget would effectively lower the state spending limit under Initiative 601. To avoid this, Republicans will ask voters in November 1998 to approve an exemption to make the shift without affecting the spending limit.

Drunk driving is another key issue the

Legislature will address this year. What can legislators do?

Here's what we're looking at:

- Lowering the legal blood-alcohol limit from .10 to .08.
- Impounding the cars of drunk drivers.
- Installing breathalyzer ignition locks in cars of convicted drunk drivers. If the person has been drinking, he or she won't be able to start the car.
- Leaving drunk driving convictions on a person's permanent record.
- Increasing jail sentences for drunk drivers.

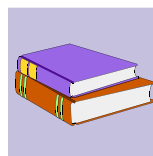
Enforcing stiffer penalties, in addition to improving coordination among all law enforcement agencies at the local level, will give the message that the state is serious about curtailing drunk driving.



Water will continue to be a big issue in the '98 session. As vice chair of the Agriculture and Ecology Committee, I'll be working with my colleagues to deal with many federal mandates,

including the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act. Watershed planning, with an emphasis on involvement from local communities, will be a top priority for the committee.

The **Growth Management Act** debate remains at the forefront. I will reissue my bill dealing with tax benefits for lands required to stay in agricultural use due to GMA's requirements.



Education hearings will focus on improving reading scores as well as giving more control to local communities. Getting more education money *directly to the classroom* is my

ongoing goal. Funding K-20 technology, a computer and video network that links

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Washington's public schools, universities and community colleges, will continue to be a priority topic in higher education.



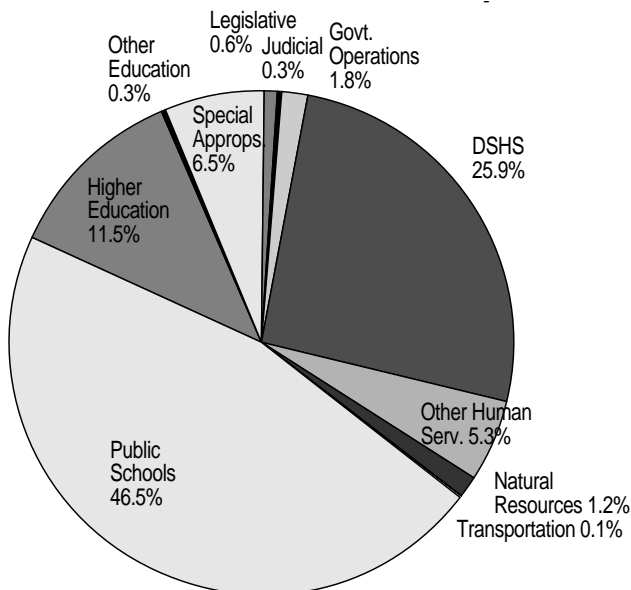
Responsible spending. The state's general fund spending is limited due to the voter-passed Initiative 601, which links state spending to population growth and the rate of

inflation.

We are expected to have an \$861 million budget surplus by 1999. Out of that surplus, we hope to keep about \$500 million in reserve, to be used in case of future economic downturns or for emergency situations. That leaves about \$361 million. However, when the I-601 spending limits are factored in, we will actually only have \$185 million to work with.

1997-99 General Fund-State Expenditures

Total 1997-99: \$1.59 billion



Washington has three separate budgets: The general fund, pictured above, transportation and capital budget.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I will see firsthand how the 1998 supplemental budget will come together. I will



work hard to ensure your tax dollars are being utilized efficiently and responsibly by state government.



Criminal justice funding. Many of our cities and counties are struggling to find money for criminal justice. I'll be working with other legislators to find possible new revenue sources for criminal justice.

Other issues...

Farm worker housing:

Gov. Gary Locke has agreed to work with us on a bill to allow less strict rules for the construction of temporary worker housing. Last year the governor vetoed such a bill. This summer Sen. Margarita Prentice, Secretary of Health Bruce Miyahara and a representative from the governor's office visited our orchard for a firsthand experience of observing a cherry harvest.

Certificates of need:

This is a process which has to do with building new health-care facilities such as hospitals, kidney dialysis units, nursing homes, home health care and ambulatory surgery centers. There is a good deal of controversy over the necessity for certificates of need. I believe we should decide, now, what kind of health care we want in Washington 10 years down the road – a more long-term outlook will help guide the decisions we make in this legislative session.

Availability of health insurance in the marketplace:

This continues to be a strong interest of mine. This issue, most likely, will not be addressed in this short session.

★ ***Listen to the Legislature on-line!*** ★

Those of you who have a computer with a sound system and have access to the Internet *can listen to all deliberations of the state Legislature – live*. You can also tune into previous days' deliberations. This service is provided by TVW, Washington state's version of C-Span – it is the statewide nonprofit television network.

The website address is **www.tvw.org**. The software you need to listen to the Legislature is free and can be downloaded over the Internet.

Please keep in touch

Whether it's by phone, mail or e-mail, I encourage you to stay in touch with me throughout the session. My numbers and addresses are on the front of this newsletter – your input is important to me!